

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BONN

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UNCLAS USNATO 5138

SECDEF PASS TO ODDR&E/IP (MR. R. BASIL)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: NATO, MILI

SUBJ: TRIPARTITE TANK MAIN ARMAMENT EVALUATION

REF: USNATO 5101 DTG 181835Z SEP 75

1. LONDON TIMES, 19 SEPT 75, PUBLISHED FOLLOW-ON STORY TO REUTER DISPATCH (QUOTED REFTEL) ENTITLED "TANK GUN 'VICTORY' FOR AMERICA DISCOUNTED". TEXT FOLLOWS: BEGIN TEXT.

A REPORT CIRCULATING IN WASHINGTON THAT TANK GUN TRIALS CONDUCTED BY BRITAIN, WEST GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES THIS YEAR HAD RESULTED IN A "VICTORY" FOR THE UNITED STATES WAS BEING DISCOUNTED BY SOURCES IN LONDON LAST NIGHT.

THE TRIALS WERE HELD ON THE RANGES AT SHOEBOURNESS TO HELP THE THREE COUNTRIES DECIDE UPON A STANDARD GUN AND AMMUNITION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF NATO BATTLE TANKS.

BRITAIN CONTRIBUTED A 110MM GUN, WEST GERMANY A 120MM GUN WHICH LIKE THE LATEST RUSSIAN TANK GUN HAS A SMOOTH BORE BARREL USING FIN STABILIZED SHELLS, AND THE UNITED STATES A BRITISH-DESIGNED 105MM GUN FIRING A NEW IMPROVED RANGE OF AMMUNITION.

THE REPORT, QUOTING SOURCES IN WASHINGTON, SAID THAT THE UNCLASSIFIED

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EVALUATION GROUP HAD COME DOWN IN FAVOUR OF ADOPTING THE AMERICAN SOLUTION WHICH INCLUDED A NEW KIND OF "TUNGSTEN CARBIDE AND DEPLETED URANIUM" ARMOUR PIERCING DISCARDING SABOT SHELL, CAPABLE OF SMASHING THROUGH THE THICK ARMOUR ON THE LATEST RUSSIAN

T72 TANK.

A MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SPOKESMAN IN LONDON SAID LAST NIGHT:
"THE EVALUATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND A REPORT IS BEING STUDIED
BY THE THREE COUNTRIES CONCERNED AND BY FRANCE WHICH PARTICIPATED
AS AN OBSERVER.

"THIS WILL BE DISCUSSED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOUR COUN-
TRIES AT A MEETING IN WASHINGTON NEXT MONTH, AND AN AGREED RECOM-
MENDATION WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE CONFERENCE OF NATO
ARMAMENTS DIRECTORS."

BRITISH SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE REPORT GIVES NO CLEAR LEAD
TO ANY ONE SOLUTION, AND THE FINAL RECOMMENDATION IS AS YET
FAR FROM CLEAR.
END QUOTE

2. WE PRESUME THAT THIS REPORT IS ACCURATE BY CONTRAST WITH THE
EARLIER REUTER RELEASE WHICH WE, AS WELL AS ALLIES, FOUND SOME-
WHAT SURPRISING. PENDING WASHINGTON RESPONSE TO REFTTEL, WE
SHALL ACCEPT THE STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO MOD SPOKESMAN AS BEING
AUTHORITATIVE AND WE SHALL ATTEMPT TO DISCOURAGE SPECULATION
ON SELECTION OF A WINNER. REQUEST WASHINGTON CONCURRENCE. BRUCE

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